

NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT



Office of Public Information

Contact: Janet Bancroft | (402) 471-3730 | jbancroft@nsc.state.ne.us
www.supremecourt.ne.gov

For Immediate Release

Legal Self-Help Desk Pilot Project Underway in Lancaster County

(Lincoln, NE) – July 23, 2007 – A new Legal Self-Help Desk opened in the Lancaster County Courthouse located next door to the Clerk of the District Court's office on July 2, 2007. The office is designed to provide legal information to individuals who are not able to retain the services of an attorney for representation in civil matters before the courts.

"While the Self-Help Desk is not a substitute for representation by a lawyer, the reality is that many individuals appear in court unrepresented by legal counsel. Most of these people have few or no resources to hire an attorney. They attempt to navigate the court system on their own without correct information and with an incomplete understanding of the workings of the court system. The Self-Help Desk will make available correct and current information on Nebraska law and court proceedings in family law matters such as divorce, child custody, support, and visitation" said Court of Appeals Judge Richard D. Sievers, Chairperson of the Nebraska Supreme Court Pro Se Committee.

The Self-Help Desk is located off the Jury Lounge on the third floor at the Lancaster County Courthouse at 575 South 10th Street in Lincoln and is open Mondays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and Thursdays 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. No legal advice is provided, only legal information. The Lancaster County Self-Help Desk houses a small library of legal resources including manuals and brochures specific to Lancaster County.

"We are particularly pleased that Lancaster County has been selected as the first site in the state for this type of legal self-help center. The high level enthusiasm shown by volunteer lawyers from Lancaster County who will provide most of the staffing as well as Legal Aid of Nebraska and the Nebraska State Bar Association is critical to the success of this project," said Judge Karen Flowers. "We thank them, as well as Sue Kirkland, Clerk of the District Court, and her staff for their time and effort on this project which is designed to facilitate citizen access to the judicial system."

The effort to establish a Self-Help pilot project began in November of 2006 as an initiative of the Nebraska Supreme Court Committee on Implementation of Pro Se

Litigation, chaired by Sievers. A partnership between Legal Aid of Nebraska and the Nebraska State Bar Association evolved to operate the Self Help center under the supervision of the Committee as an 18 month pilot project. Legal Self-Help Centers have been well established in many other states across the country by Court Systems and Bar Associations to deal with the challenges presented to courts and court staff by the increasing number of self-represented litigants in America's courts.

For additional information, please contact:

Honorable Richard D. Sievers, Nebraska Court of Appeals and Chair of the Nebraska Supreme Court Committee on the Implementation of Pro Se Assistance, 402-471-3732.

Jean McNeil, Nebraska State Bar Association Director of Legal Services and Self-Help Desk Coordinator, 402-475-7091, or

Jen Gaughan, Legal Aid of Nebraska Managing Attorney, 402-435-2161.

#